



**Snohomish County**  
Planning and Development  
Services

**Visit us at :**

2nd Floor Robert J. Drewel Bldg.  
3000 Rockefeller Avenue  
Everett, WA 98201

425-388-3311  
1-800-562-4367, ext. 3311



**ONLINE INFORMATION**  
[www.snohomishcountywa.gov/1190](http://www.snohomishcountywa.gov/1190)



This Assistance Bulletin only applies to property within unincorporated Snohomish County and does not apply to property within incorporated city limits.

# SEPA Review for Residential Improvements

Assistance Bulletin

# #55

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**Keyword: Assistance Bulletins**

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) is intended to provide information to agencies, applicants and the public to encourage the development of environmentally sound proposals. SEPA is intended to ensure that environmental values are considered during decision-making by state and local agencies.

## Q: What type of projects require SEPA review?

**A:** The following are common examples of projects that require SEPA review by Snohomish County in conjunction with single family residential development:

- Projects that take place on lands wholly or partially covered by water, such as installing a culvert in a stream, constructing a dock on a lake, and any shoreline stabilization project;
- Projects that involve moving 500 or more cubic yards of earth materials;
- Projects that involve moving 250 or more cubic yards of earth materials within 200 feet of a Shoreline of the State and any project that requires a Shoreline Permit; and
- Projects that require Class IV Forest Practices permits.

## Q: What if SEPA is required?

**A:** If SEPA is required for your project, then:

- You must fill out a SEPA checklist and pay the required fee. The questions on the checklist are standard and each question should be carefully read and answered. If the checklist is complete, the review can continue. If information is missing, or questions are not answered in their entirety, additional review and research must be undertaken. This will require more time for your review.
- Your SEPA review will go faster if a detailed and accurate site plan is submitted with the original application. The site plan should include the location of:
  - ◇ All critical areas. Critical areas are streams, wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas and geologically hazardous areas;
  - ◇ All proposed site disturbance. Please include the construction footprint for your buildings, driveways, parking areas, yard, pasture, water source, electricity or utility lines, septic tanks, transport lines, primary and reserve drain-field and/or sewer line; and
  - ◇ Cross section of all grading along with the supporting calculations.
- County staff will review the project, checklist and supporting documentation to identify any likely adverse environmental impacts and potential mitigation. This review will include a site visit. After the review is completed, a "threshold determination" will be issued. The SEPA threshold determination is the formal decision as to whether the proposal is likely to cause a significant adverse environmental impact for which mitigation cannot be easily identified.

This bulletin is intended only as an information guide. The information may not be complete and is subject to change. For complete legal information, refer to Snohomish County Code.

- If there are no likely significant adverse environmental impacts, a Determination of Nonsignificance (DNS) is issued. If significant impacts are likely, a Determination of Significance (DS) is issued and the environmental impact statement process is started. According to the SEPA Rules, significant means “a reasonable likelihood of more than a moderate adverse impact on environmental quality.” To avoid a DS, the applicant may change the project so the impacts are not significant.
- The County will send a copy of the threshold determination to two different newspapers for publication. You will receive a copy as well.
- You are responsible for paying all costs for publishing the threshold determinations in the two newspapers. The newspaper will send the billing statement to you.
- You will receive a copy of the threshold determination and a “Posting Instructions” letter regarding the posting of your property. You will need to post two signs in two different and conspicuous locations on your property per Section 30.70.045, Snohomish County Code. An Affidavit of Posting must be notarized and returned to the County.
- A 14-day Public Comment period begins from the date of posting or the date threshold determinations are published, whichever is the latest. The County also will notify by mail all property owners within 500-1,000 feet of your project. Substantive comments may be incorporated in the DNS process and could alter your project.
- After the 14-day comment period expires and all other necessary reviews are completed, the County may issue your permit. You will be notified.
  - ◇ Affidavit of Posting;
  - ◇ Copy of the posting notice; and
  - ◇ Affidavit of Publishing (we do not receive these until the newspapers are paid).